

LOUISE E. PERKINS.

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JANUARY 29, 1897.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House and ordered to be printed.

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Mr. KIRKPATRICK, from the Committee on Invalid Pensions, submitted the following

REPORT.

[To accompany S. 3339.]

The Committee on Invalid Pensions, to whom was referred the bill (S. 3339) granting a pension to Louise E. Perkins, having considered the same, respectfully adopt the report of the Senate Committee on Pensions, and recommend the passage of the bill without amendment.

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[Senate Report No. 1229, Fifty-fourth Congress, second session.]

The Committee on Pensions, to whom was referred the bill (S. 3339) granting a pension to Louise E. Perkins, have had the same under consideration, and beg leave to report as follows:

Louise E. Perkins is the widow of Bishop W. Perkins, who enlisted as a private in D Company of the Eighty-third Regiment Illinois Volunteers, on the 2d day of August, 1862, and was honorably discharged and mustered out of the service April 30, 1866. During his period of enlistment he was transferred to Company C of the Sixteenth Regiment United States Colored Infantry, of which company he was made captain, and was mustered out of the service with that rank, April 30, 1866. This soldier had held the rank of sergeant, lieutenant, adjutant, and captain. The record shows that he was always present for duty with his command except when he was detailed for special service. From August 31, 1865, to February 28, 1866, he was on duty as acting assistant adjutant-general of the post at Chattanooga, Tenn.

During the time when this soldier was on duty with his original company, part of the regiment was ordered to duty at Clarksville, Tenn., where a company of mounted infantry was organized of which company this soldier was an active and faithful member. The work of these mounted infantrymen was difficult, arduous, and dangerous. They served as a cavalry scout for all the region round about. They were necessarily often and dangerously exposed, not only to the enemy but to hardships occasioned by inclement weather and malarial atmosphere. It was during this period that the soldier contracted that dreaded camp disease known as chronic diarrhea, which grew upon him and remained with him until the time of his death, which occurred June 20, 1894, in the city of Washington, from the effects of his old army complaint.

His widow, the said Louise E. Perkins, made application for pension on or about the 30th day of November, 1895 (number of claim 625112). Her claim was rejected on the ground that the disease of the brain from which it is alleged the soldier died "can not be accepted as due to chronic diarrhea."

It appears from the testimony that soon after the disease of diarrhea attacked this soldier during his army service, he became troubled with extreme derangement of his digestive functions. While at times his bowels were troublesome from diarrhea a reaction would occur, going to the opposite extreme of constipation; indigestion following, in a malarial atmosphere, headache of a severe and painful character resulted, and that trouble likewise followed him to the hour and minute of his death. And the difficulty with the Pension Bureau appears to have been to determine whether or not the extreme pain in his head shortly before his death was the

result of diarrhea contracted during his military service. That is the only point in the case.

Your committee have very carefully examined the testimony upon that point and are clearly of the opinion that, while from the standpoint of a physician's technical education, and under the strict rules of interpretation adopted by the Pension Bureau, some importance might attach to the query as to whether the "effusion in brain, cause of death, could not have had any pathological connection with the attack of dysentery for which he is shown to have been treated," the proof is clear that from the beginning the disease of dysentery or diarrhea, and these extreme headaches, with continuous derangement of digestive functions, continued apparently as manifestations of the same original disease to the end. A number of witnesses were examined, persons who were acquainted with the soldier during the time of his service and all along during the period of his life afterwards, and they, without exception, agree that the symptoms above named were apparent continuously with brief intervals during all of that time.

The witnesses further testify that the habits of life of this soldier were good; that he was not addicted to intemperance or to any vicious habits of any character whatever.

The writer of this report served in the same regiment with the deceased soldier, and personally knows the nature of his service, and has been acquainted with him, more or less intimately, during all the years intervening between that time and the day of his death. He is also acquainted with a number of the witnesses who have testified in the case and knows them to be persons of high character and wholly disinterested in every statement. Bishop W. Perkins enlisted as a private; by reason of his merits as a soldier, his intelligence and general good character as a man he rose from the ranks to sergeant, lieutenant, adjutant, and captain, and after returning to civil life he held several important offices of trust. He was probate judge and district judge for many years in Kansas. He was elected from that State to the Congress of the United States, in which body he served four terms, and was afterwards appointed by the governor of the State to fill the vacancy in the United States Senate occasioned by the death of Senator Plumb.

This soldier would have been entitled at any time after his muster out to a pension, but he was one of those patriotic men that did not feel like asking the Government to support him or to supply any part of his support as long as he was able to help himself. Several of the witnesses testify that he was frequently advised to apply for a pension, but that he always refused for the reason above given. His widow, the said Louise E. Perkins, is in limited circumstances, with but meager means of support.

In view of all these facts and circumstances in this case, the committee believe that his widow is justly entitled to the pension for which she asks, and therefore recommend the passage of the bill when amended by striking out the word "thirty" and inserting "twenty," in the seventh line.